

IN THE CLAIMS

Please make the following amendments to the claims:

1.-41. (Canceled)

42. (New) A method comprising:

examining two firmware modules to determine a required order of dispatch of the firmware modules;

dispatching an earlier of the two firmware modules and then dispatching a later of the two firmware modules; and

initializing a system memory after dispatching the two firmware modules.

43. (New) The method of claim 42 wherein examining comprises checking a resource list of each of the two firmware modules.

44. (New) The method of claim 42 wherein each of the two modules examines a platform to determine whether hardware to be initialized by the module is present in the platform.

45. (New) The method of claim 42, further comprising:

marking a data structure after dispatching a firmware module, wherein the data structure is to indicate whether the firmware module has been dispatch.

46. (New) The method of claim 45 wherein the data structure is a bit array.

47. (New) The method of claim 45 wherein the data structure is held in a processor register.

48. (New) The method of claim 42; further comprising:
invoking a function contained in a third firmware module during a dispatch of the earlier firmware module or the later firmware module, wherein the third firmware module is dispatched before the function contained in the third firmware module is invoked.

49. (New) The method of claim 48 wherein invoking comprises:
scanning a daisy chain of firmware modules to find a module that operates with a hardware component present in the platform; and
invoking the function if such a module is found.

50. (New) A computer-readable medium containing instructions to cause a programmable processor to perform operations comprising:
determining dependencies among a plurality of firmware modules based on information about services imported and exported by each of the firmware modules;
dispatching each module of the plurality of firmware modules in an order that satisfies the dependencies; and
initializing a volatile system memory after dispatching the plurality of firmware modules.

51. (New) The computer-readable medium of claim 50 wherein the information about services imported and exported by a firmware module comprises:

an import table containing at least one service that may be called by the firmware module; or
an export table containing at least one service provided by the firmware module; or

the import table and the export table.

52. (New) The computer-readable medium of claim 50, containing additional instructions to cause the programmable processor to perform operations comprising:

maintaining a data structure to indicate which firmware modules of the plurality of firmware modules have been dispatched, wherein the data structure is kept in a register of the programmable processor.

53. (New) The computer-readable medium of claim 50 wherein dispatching a module comprises saving a return address in a processor register and executing a beginning instruction of the module.

54. (New) A system comprising:

a hardware component to perform a function;

a volatile memory that can store data after the volatile memory is initialized; and

a non-volatile memory containing a Basic Input-Output System (“BIOS”) including a BIOS core and a plurality of firmware modules,

wherein two of the firmware modules are to initialize hardware components to perform the function, and

one of the two firmware modules is to initialize a hardware component that is not present in the system, and

two of the firmware modules are to be dispatched before the volatile memory is initialized.

55. (New) The system of claim 54 wherein the volatile memory is a Random Access Memory (“RAM”).

56. (New) The system of claim 54 wherein the non-volatile memory is at least one of a Read-Only Memory (“ROM”) or a Flash memory.

57. (New) The system of claim 54 wherein the hardware component is a System Management Bus (“SMBus”) controller.